

# The CLAN CALL

by Hapsburg Liebe

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

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## CHAPTER I.

### David Moreland's Mountain.

Carlyle Wilburton Dale—known to himself and a few close friends as Bill Dale—had laid out a course of action almost before the northbound train had left the outskirts of the state capital behind. It incurred facing big odds; but other men had faced big odds and won out, and what others had done he could do. Indeed, he had already done several things which other men might not have thought of doing, and one of them was leaving a bride, not figuratively but literally, at the altar in a fashionable church! But he knew Patricia hadn't wanted to marry him any more than he had wanted to marry her.

It was only natural for him to think of coal, now that he had cut loose for all time from the "set" in which he had always been a colonial misfit, now that he must pull his own oars or virtually perish. He had heard coal talked since the day of his birth; to him coal and business meant exactly the same.

One of his father's associates had often spoken of a fine vein in the mountains of eastern Tennessee—had often tried to persuade his father to look into it, to no avail. Young Dale remembered that this vein lay not far from a long railroad siding called the Halfway Switch, in the vicinity of Big Pine mountain. The owners were mountain folk of English descent, his father's associate had said. Decidedly strange, thought Dale, that his father had never cared to investigate it.

The cinders little train reached the long siding about the middle of a fine spring morning. Dale took up his bag, hastened out, and soon found himself standing alone in the heart of an extremely wild section of country.

When the noises of the little train and the fast mail it had just met had died away, there came the saucy chattering of boomer-squirrels and the sweet twittering of birds. Dale caught the nervous spirit. He could have fairly shouted out of the fullness of his very human heart. Here all was unspoiled and unprofaned, and something whispered within him:

"They won't call you a savage here—make this your own country!"

From somewhere on a nearby mountainside a rifle's keen report split the air; a bullet whined like a mad hornet; Dale's hat jumped a little on his head.

The awakening was exciting; rude. Dale wheeled, his gray eyes alight, and saw only a tiny cloud of smoke-mist rising from the laurels more than fifty feet away.

"Come out, you coward!" he roared. "Come out and let me see you," burst out taking the place of anger in his voice. "I've always wanted to know just what a real highwayman was like!"

The muffled sound of a twig breaking a short distance off to his left next claimed his attention. He was being closely watched by a pair of the finest, clearest brown eyes he had ever seen. He saw her eyes first; he never forgot that.

She was standing on a low cliff beyond the sparkling creek that flowed beside the railroad, and she was partially hidden by a clump of blooming laurel. But Dale could see that she was about twenty; that every line of her rounded, graceful figure whispered of a docile strength; that she was as straight as a young pine; that her chestnut-brown hair caught the sunlight, and that her face was oval-shaped and handsome—rather than pretty—in spite of its tan.

Dale took off his hat. There was a bullet hole in the very tip of its high-peaked crown.

"Who's the robber?" he frowned.

The girl blushed.

"Maybe he ain't a robber," she said. "Maybe he thought you was somebody else. Anyhow, you ain't had hurt, are ye?"

Dale smiled. "Oh, not seriously!"

"You ain't likely to be, of ye behave yourself."

"If I behave myself—I?" Dale laughed. "Why, I couldn't be naughty if I tried; I'm the one and only mamma's little Willie-boy! I wonder if I could put up at some house near here; eh?"

"The might be," she said, thoughtfully.

"Where?"

"At pap's, or grandpap's, or with 'most any of my people; or," she added with a contemptuous twist to her lips, "you might stay with some of them low-down Morelands."

"Where do your people live?"

"About six miles back that way," she pointed over her shoulder with a forefinger.

"Would you mind showing me the way to your parental domicile?"

"What's that, for goodness sake?"

"Your home, you know," Dale explained with a smile.

"Oh, my home. Why didn't ye say so then? No, I won't," she declared.

Dale put his bag down and rested his hands on his hips.

"Why, may I inquire?"

"'Cause I won't. I don't never keep company with no strange men-folks. But yander comes By, and he'll show ye the way; he's a-goin' over to the settlement."

Dale faced to the right and saw, coming toward him with steps that would have measured almost four feet, the tallest and laziest individual he had ever seen outside a circus. The newcomer had a smoothly shaven chin, his coal-black hair was long and his long mustache completely hid the narrow slit that was his mouth. In one hand he carried a repeating rifle.

"Who's that?" Dale half-whispered.

"That's By Heck," answered the girl. She continued in a low voice.

"His name's Sam Heck; but pap, he called him 'By Heck' one day, and the nickname stuck to him like molasses. Everybody calls him that now, even the revenuers. By, he's the biggest eater, and the biggest liar, in the world! But his lyin' don't never do no harm, and nobody keers. So of ye want to go to the settlement, mister, By, he'll take ye over. They mebbe ain't got what ye're used to fo' eatin', but ye'll be welcome to what he is."

She laughed a little, turned, and disappeared among the blooming laurels.

The man By Heck wore the poor clothing of a poor hillman. His hat, which had once been black, was all brim and yet all crown; his suspend-

ers, which had been bought with a 'coonhide, were redder than fire; his rumpled cowhide boots seemed ridiculously short because of the great length of his slender legs.

When he had reached a point some three yards from Dale, he halted, placed the butt of his rifle carefully between his toes, and leaned on its muzzle; then he deliberately began to take eye measurements of the newcomer.

Dale didn't like the stare—to him it was impudent.

"Well, what's the verdict?" he asked sharply.

"Speaks like a man," drawled By Heck. "I reckon you must be up here a-lookin' fo' coal."

"How did you reach such a conclusion as that?"

"Jest plain boss sense." The drooping mustache wobbled the words somewhat. "The ain't but three things 'at can bring a city man here, mister," he drawled on, "and them's mounshins, stills, and coal. And you shore ain't got bad health, and you ain't got the cut of a revenuer, though a few minutes ago I thought mebbe ye was."

"And you shot at me!" said Dale.

"No," objected Heck. "I shot at yore hat. I ains hit at what I shoots at, mister. I wanted ye to turn yore face, so's I could see it, and ye did. As fo' that coal—"

"The Morelands, they owns the coal in David Moreland's mountain, and they won't sell it fo' no 'mount o' money. They lives over in the settlement, them and the Littlefords. They're every danged one blue folks."

"Cause I won't! I don't never keep company with no strange men-folks."

"The gruff, or the coal—is that what's a-botherin' ye, Bill?"

Dale's eyes twinkled. "Must I choose between them?" he laughed.

"Shore!" By Heck wasn't even smiling. "Shore! The Morelands and Littlefords hates each other worse nor a blue-tailed hawk hates a crow. The gruff, or the coal, Bill?"

"We'll go down to John Moreland's," announced Dale.

The mountaineer took up his rifle. "Let me gi' ye a word or two o' warnin'," he continued seriously. "Don't you offer to pay John Moreland fo' eatin' his grub, nor fo' sleepin' in his bed, nor fo' chawin' his tobacco. If ye do, yore goose will shore be cooked with John Moreland. But ef ye was to brag on the vittles a little, John's wife a-sets' powerful handy in the kitchen, it wouldn't do a danged bit o' harm. Le' ye understand it all now, Bill?"

Dale nodded, and they began the descent.

John Moreland's house was built of whole oak logs, which were chinked with oak splits and daubed in between with clay; the roof was of handmade planks, and a chimney of stones and clay rose at either end.

John Moreland himself sat on the front porch, and beside him lay a repeating rifle, two young squirrels that had been very neatly shot through the head, and a weary black-and-tan hound. He was an uncommonly big man, and about forty-seven; his eyes were gray and keen; his thick hair and full beard were a rich brown, with only a few threads of white. There was a certain Englishness about the man. One felt that he could trust John Moreland.

As the moonshiner and his companion reached the gate Moreland rose and pushed his hat back from his forehead.

"Hi, John," grinned Heck. "This here feller wants to stay with ye a few days, John. Seems to be all right."

"Come right in," invited the chief of the Morelands. He indicated the home-made chair he had just vacated. "Set down thar and rest, stranger. I'll be back in a minute or so."

He hastened into the cabin, carrying the squirrels with him.

"He's went to tell his wife to hatch up a extra good dinner, Bill," whispered Heck. "Pepper-cured ham, young chicken, hot biscuits, fresh butter, wild honey, huckleberry pie and peach pie and strawberry preserves—Bill, I can't hardly stand it. Blast my picture of I couldn't eat two whole raw daws right now, I'm that dinged hungry. Well, I got to ramble on home. I live down the river half a mile, we and my maw. Come to see me, Bill, and we'll go a-shootin'. No long, Bill old boy!"

John Moreland returned presently.

I'm a-goin' over thar now. Want to go long? Say—dang my picture of I didn't forget to ask what might be yore name, mister!"

"Bill Dale," came quickly—"Bill Dale. Settlement? Sure! Lead the way, By Heck. Who's the young woman I was talking with when you came up?"

"Who? Her? That's old Ben Littleford's girl. Her name's Habs. That's what they call her. She's got another name; but it ain't been used fo' so long it's been fo'got, I reckon. She's the youngest one o' old Ben's children. She hain't like none o' the rest o' the Littlefords. By gosh, she's awful high-headed. She can read good, Habs can. Old Major Bradley, from down at Cartersville in the lowland, he spends his summers up here fo' his health, and he taught Habs how to read. Fine feller, Major Bradley. Lawyer. Habs she has done read everything in the whole danged country. The's several Bibles, and a book about a Pilgrim's Progress, and a Baker's Hoos and Cattle Almanack, and a dictionary."

"But we'd better light out fo' the settlement, Mr. Bill, or we'll miss dinner, mebbe. I'm a plumb danged foot about eatin'. I e't twenty-two biscuits o' flour-bread this mornin' fo' breakfast, besides a whole b'iled bamsbank, and other things accordin'. It's the dyin' truth! Come on, Mr. Bill."

They went down to the creek, crossed it on stones, and began to climb the low cliff.

After an hour's traveling Heck stopped in the trail and put the butt of his rifle to the ground.

"From right here, Bill," he said, "we can see every house in the whole danged settlement."

They were standing on the crest of David Moreland's mountain. Below them lay a broad valley checkered with small farms; and each farm had its log cabin, its log barn and its apple orchard. Beyond it all rose the great and majestic Big Pine, which was higher and more rugged with cliffs than David Moreland's mountain.

"The Morelands lives on this side o' the river, and the Littlefords lives on yon side," drawled Heck. "They don't never have nothing to do with each other, but they don't hardly ever fight; they're all strappin' big men, and they fights so danged hard it don't pay. My gosh, Bill, every man o' 'em can shoot a gun's eyelash off at four hundred yards—I wish I may drop dead ef they can't! Do ye see that big cabin right plumb in the middle o' the high half o' the settlement, Bill? Well, the boss o' the Morelands he lives thar—John Moreland. That's whar you want to go, Bill, sence ye've got a curable case o' the disease known as coal-on-the-brain. But I can tell ye aforehand, you ain't got enough money to buy that coal, don't matter how much money ye've got."

Dale was not looking toward John Moreland's home now. His gaze had wandered to the other side of the river. By Heck waited a full minute for a reply to his speech, then he spoke again:

"The gruff, or the coal—is that what's a-botherin' ye, Bill?"

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John Moreland returned presently.

The man from the city rose and proffered his hand.

"My name," he began, old habit strong upon him, "is Carlyle—"

Before he could get any farther with it, John Moreland flung the hand from him as though it were a thing of unspeakable contamination. His bearded face went deathly white with the whiteness of an old and bitter hatred. His great fists clenched, and every muscle in his giant body trembled.

"What's the matter, man?" Dale wanted to know.

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Sept. 18, 1921

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Jacksonville Branch,  
Jacksonville, Florida.  
Gentlemen:—

I solemnly beseech the history of a Fiat Firestone Cord tire. This tire has run 27,000 miles. I have retreaded at seven times. The average mileage to each retreading was about 1,000. I think you will agree this is a remarkable record. It is especially unusual as I know the usage to be a severe driver. However, he gives his three proper indication. The tire is equal to its work and every indication of being satisfactorily strong for another retread. I am mailing photograph under separate cover.

C. U. Finney,  
Plant City, Fla.

Sept. 2, 1921

The Harvey R. Mack Co.,  
Thompson & Harrison Place,  
Montreal,  
Quebec—

It seems to me that you might be interested in the mileage that I obtained from the set of Firestone Cord tires on my 1918 Buick. The first set was over 28,000 miles. The second set ran up a mileage of between 34,000 and 36,000. These were both run on a 1918 Buick and have not been retreaded. I expect to get at least 40,000 miles from each set. I need exactly 1000 miles more to get the Firestone Cord will be my first choice for the future.

Arthur H. Beard,  
577 LaSalle Bldg.,  
Montreal.

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